

# 'Raptors at Risk' video wins environmental competition

**C**SO Environmental Specialist **John Bridges** and **Larry Holgerson**, former videographer, helped produce an award-winning environmental video called "Raptors at Risk." Former AIMSI videographer, Greg Brown also contributed significantly to the video. Entered in the environmental category of EDM International's 2000 Technical Achievement Award Video Competition, "Raptors" informs the public and interested utilities about the need to make power lines safe for birds of prey.

Rick Harness, EDM environmental specialist, said, "The video effort was initiated by a diverse group of professional biologists, falconers, conservationists, consultants, wildlife rehabilitators and electric utility members concerned about the persistent problem of raptor electrocutions. The goal of the video was to raise awareness and provide economical ways to prevent raptor electrocutions. One section of the video was even provided

by utility biologist Jo Hess taken in Tasmania, Australia.

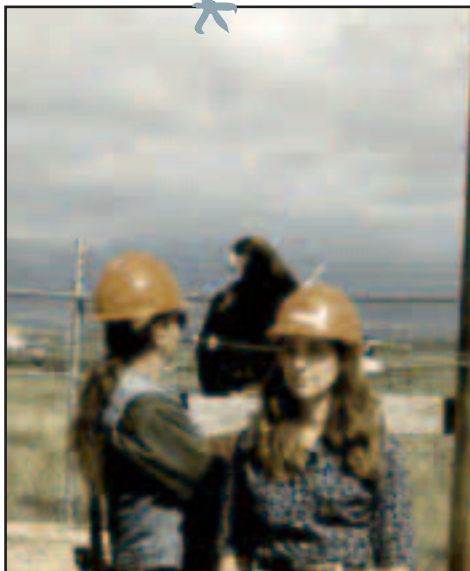
"Major cash funding for the project came from the North American Falconer's Association and National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Western provided a camera crew and the use of its video studio. Western biologists **John Bridges** and **Ted Anderson** also coordinated the numerous project conference calls," Harness said.

Many groups volunteered to work with the film crews to provide video. The city of Colorado Springs provided its pole training yard and line crews to demonstrate how to retrofit powerlines. The Rural Utilities Service and White River Electric also worked on the project, along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. EDM International worked closely with the production company, Greening America, to write the script and coordinate shots.

"Working on 'Raptors at Risk' was an interesting, if at times frustrating project," Holgerson said. "For more than a year, I collected hours of blue sky with little black specks soaring around in it. It could be

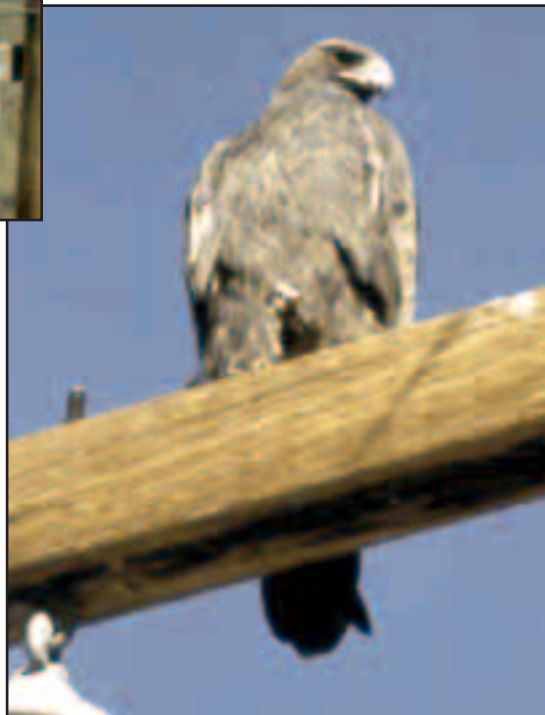
very frustrating sitting all day in the hot sun waiting for an eagle or hawk to fly past, getting nothing, and then on the drive back, finding a beautiful bald eagle in a tree just off the side of the road.

"Certainly the most memorable experiences centered around a red-tailed hawk christened 'Cinderella' by the volunteers who work at the Birds-of-Prey Raptor Rehabilitation Center. When I met Cinderella for her first photo shoot, all the feathers on one wing, half of her tail feathers and one claw were badly burnt. She temporarily blacked out in downtown Denver after an accidental electrocution on a power line. She was terrified, desperate and panic-filled. Nine months later, after her claw healed and feathers molted, her release was a tearfully happy



*Above: Members of "Raptors at Risk" video crew with a golden eagle. "Raptors" received an environmental award for raising awareness and providing economical ways to prevent raptor electrocutions.*

*Right: A golden eagle perched atop a utility pole during the filming of the award-winning video "Raptors at Risk." (Photos by Rick Harness)*



event for all who attended," Holgerson said.

Bridges spearheaded the Raptor Video Protection Group, which met by teleconference with ideas and suggestions for this very important documentary video.

Holgerson said, "Hundreds of eagles, hawks, vultures and owls are electrocuted every year when they perch or hunt from electrical power lines. With the technology available, simple 'fixes' can ensure that such majestic creatures co-exist with mankind and his demands for electrical power, and Western is leading that outcry.

"Editing was a long and arduous process of pulling together footage from various sources into a coherent final product. It is always memorable working with great talent, and Larry Green, local weatherman, as narrator showed us how to do it with flair. Now we await its presentation on PBS.

"I'm proud of our final product, though I still turn my head from the falcon electrocution that I've seen hundreds of times. It was a great feeling to hear that all our time and effort was recognized when we received the Silver Award," Holgerson said.

Raptor electrocution continues to be one of the major wildlife concerns of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, especially in

states west of the Mississippi River.

Raptors, or birds of prey, include eagles, falcons, owls, kites, osprey and vultures. The USFWS Law Enforcement Division has documented the electrocution of 1,030 migratory birds in Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. Many raptors are protected by laws including the Eagle Protection Act, Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Raptors at Risk educates the public and industry about the persistent problem of raptor electrocutions and provides possible solutions. The video:

- ◆ identifies birds of prey and the appreciation of these birds from an aesthetic sense and their importance to the ecosystem.
- ◆ outlines the problem of raptor electrocutions (including site problems—location of facilities, design of structures and associated outages).
- ◆ summarizes laws and regulations and associated penalties that protect these birds.
- ◆ offers solutions including pre-construction design solutions and post-construction retrofit in problem areas. 🦅



*These two pictures show an osprey (right) and a golden eagle dangerously perched on crossarms of utility poles. Raptor electrocution continues to be one of the major wildlife concerns of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (Photos by Rick Harness)*